

# TOO MUCH LIBATION AT A GRADUATION

*Adapted by AM1 Sylvia Edwards*

**A**t 10 o'clock in the morning, my nephew, Henry, was helping his cousin, Kevin, finish setting up for a graduation party. These two are close—like brothers—which isn't a surprise, since Henry is only a year older and lives on the same road, less than a mile away.

The first order of business for Henry when he arrived was to re-ice a keg, tap it, and, of course, sample the brew. By the time the first guests arrived, both Henry and Kevin already were "glowing." The day was filled with guests playing cards and drinking beer, eating and drinking beer, or, as in Henry's case, just drinking beer.

By 11 p.m., Henry's dad, who had been at the party for 10 hours, was getting tired, so Henry offered him a ride home. Henry helped his dad into the passenger seat of his nearly new, red, Dodge Ram 4X4, then drove the mile to their farm. His dad got out of the truck and walked to the house. Meanwhile, Henry went back to the party.

It was 2 o'clock the next morning—14 hours after he had started drinking—before Henry headed home. Did I mention he always has to be the last one to leave a party?

After pouring himself into his truck, Henry started toward his house. He got about halfway there before he passed out while driving 40 to 50 mph and hit the only tree along the route big enough to do any damage. The crash severed the engine compartment from the firewall. Because Henry wasn't wearing a seat

belt, he was thrown through the windshield and landed in the middle of the road. He awoke moments later to the ticking sound of an exhaust manifold cooling.


It was so dark Henry thought he had hit another car and was lying next to it. He later learned the sound he heard came from his own engine, which had landed next to him in the road. He was so close to the engine he could feel the heat radiating from it. If it had rolled one more time, the engine would have landed on top of him.

Henry couldn't move his legs, and he didn't have the strength to pull himself out of the road. Thankfully, his neighbor, Dave, had been awakened by the noise from the crash and came to investigate. When Dave yelled and asked if anyone was hurt, Henry managed to tell him to call 911 before passing out again. Dave asked his wife to make the call, and he returned to the scene to stay with Henry until the paramedics arrived.

Henry suffered a broken hip that caused a trauma to his lower back, and he was paralyzed for three weeks. Doctors had predicted he never would walk again, but feeling returned to his legs, and he made a full recovery.

In a later analysis of the wreck, it was determined that had the crash occurred when Henry's dad was in the truck, the stick shift would have been driven into his chest just before the dashboard pinned him against the back of the seat. His dad would have bled to death before help could have arrived. Had Henry been wearing a seat belt, his injuries would have been minor, and he wouldn't have had to spend three weeks in the hospital.

If you've been drinking and are at the house of a friend or relative, stay where you are and sleep it off,

or have someone drive you home. If nothing else, sleep in your vehicle. Just remember to open the window a bit for ventilation and have a blanket available—in case it's cold. If you hold a party at your house, plan on having some guests stay the night, especially at graduation time. 

Original story by PR1 Daniel Niles, VQ-3.

